

dwellinges in me. O ye, my frendes, what
or wherto auaunted ye me to ben weleful?
for he that hath fallen stood nat in stede-
fast degree.

Prose I.

Rec dum mecum tacitus ipse reputarem.

WHILE that I stille
recordede thise
things with my
self, and markede
my weeply com-
pleynte with of-
fice of pointel, I
saw, stondinge a-
boven the heighte
of myn heved, a
woman of ful greet reverence by sem-
blaunt, hir eyen brenninge and cleerseinge
over the comune might of men; with a lyfly
colour, and with swich vigour & strengthe
that it ne mighte nat ben emptied; al were
it so that she was ful of so greet age, that
men ne wolde nat trowen, in no manere,
that she were of oure elde. The stature of
hir was of a doutous jugement; for som-
tyme she constreinede and shronk hirs-
elven lyk to the comune mesure of men, and
sumtyme it semede that she touchede the
hevene with the heighte of hir heved; and
whan she heef hir heved hyer, she percede
the selve hevene, so that the sighte of men
looking was in ydel. Hir clothes weren
maked of right delye thredes and subtil
crafte, of perdurable matere; the whiche
clothes she hadde woven with hir owene
hondes, as I knew wel after by hirself, de-
claringe & shewing to me the beautee; the
whiche clothes a derknesse of a forleten &
dispyssed elde hadde dushed and derked,
as it is wont to derken bismokede images.

IN the nethereste hem or bordure of
thise clothes men reddene, ywoven
in, a Grekissh P, that signifieth the
lyf Actif; and aboven that lettre, in the
heyste bordure, a Grekissh T, that signi-
fyeth the lyf Contemplatif. And bitwixen
these two lettres ther weren seyn degrees,
nobly ywrought in manere of laddres; by
whiche degrees men mighten climben fro
the nethereste lettre to the uppereste.
Natheles, handes of some men hadde cor-
ven that cloth by violence & by strengthe;
and everiche man of hem hadde born away
swiche peces as he mighte geten. And for-
sothe, this forseide woman bar smale
bokes in hir right hand, & in hir left hand
she bar a ceptre.

AND whan she say thise poetical
Muses aprochen aboute my bed, and
endytinge wordes to my wepinges,
she was a litel amoved, and glowede with
cruel eyen. Who, quod she, hath suffred
aprochen to this syke man thise comune
strompetes of swich a place that men cle-

pen the theatre? The whiche nat only ne
asswage nat hise sorwes with noner me-
dies, but they wolden feden & norrisshen
hem with swete venim. Forsothe, thise ben
tho that with thornes and prikkings, thise ben
talents or affeccions, whiche that ne ben
nothyng fructefyinge nor profitable, de-
stroyen the corn plenteuous of fruites of
resoun; for they holden the hertes of men
in usage, but they ne deliver nat folk fro
maladye. But if ye Muses hadden with-
drawn fro me, with your flateryes, any un-
cunninge and unprofitable man, as men
ben wont to finde comunly amonges the
poepel, I wolde wene suffre the lasse gre-
vously; for why, in swiche an unprofitable
man, myn ententes ne weren nothyng en-
damaged. But ye withdrawn me this man,
that hath ben norrisshed in the studies or
scoles of Eleaticis and of Academicis in
Greece. But goth now rather away, ye mer-
maidenes, whiche that ben swete til it be
at the laste, and suffreth this man to be
cured and heled by myne Muses, that is to
seyn, by notable sciences.

AND thus this compaignie of Muses
yblamed casten wrothly the chere
downward to the erthe; and, shew-
inge by reednesse hir shame, they passede
en sorowfully the threshfold.

AND I, of whom the sighte, plounged
in teres, was derked so that I ne
mighte not knowen what that wom-
an was, of so imperial auctoritee, I wer-
al abaissed and astoned, and caste my
sighte down to the erthe, and bigan stille
for to abyde what she wolde don after-
ward. Tho com she ner, and sette hir down
upon the uttereste corner of my bed; and
she, biholdinge my chere, that was cast to
the erthe, hevye and grevous of wepinge,
compleinede, with thise wordes that I shal
seyen, the perturbacioun of my thought.

Metre II.

Heu quam precipiti mersa profundo.

ALAS! how the thought of
man, dreint in overthrow-
inge deepnesse, dulleth, and
forleteth his propre cleer-
nesse, mintinge to goon in-
to foreine derknesses, as
ofte as his anyous bisinesse weexeth
without measure, that is driven to and fro
with worldly windes! This man, that why-
lom was free, to whom the hevene was open
and known, and was wont to goon in hev-
eneliche pathes, and saugh the lightnesse
of the rede sonne, & saugh the sterres of
the colde mone, & whiche sterre in hevene
useth wandering recourses, yfit by di-
verse speres; this man, overcomer, hadde
comprehended al this by noumbre of a-
countinge in astronomye. And over this,
he was wont to seken the causes wheris



the souning windes moeven and bisien the
smothe water of the see; & what spirit torn-
eth the stable hevene; and why the sterre
aryseth out of the rede cest, to fallen in the
westrene wawes; and what atempreth the
lusty houres of the firste somer sesoun,
that highteth and apparileth the erthe with
rosene flowres; and who maketh that plen-
teuous autumpne, in fulle yeres, fleteth with
hevye grapes. And eek this man was wont to
telle the diverse causes of nature that weren
whidde. Alas! now lyeth he emptied of light
of his thought; & his nekke is pressed with
hevye cheynes; and bereth his chere enclyned
adoun for the grete weighte, & is constreined
to looken on the fool erthe!

Prose II.

Set medicine, inquit, tempus est.

BUT tyme is now, quod
she, of medicine more
than of compleinte. Forsothe than she en-
tendinge to meward
with alle the lookinge
of hir eyen, seide: Art
nat thou he, quod she,
that whylom ynoris-
shed with my milk, &

fostered with myne metes, were escaped and
comen to corage of a parfit man? Certes, I yaf
thee swiche armures that, yif thou thyself ne
haddest first cast hem away, they shulden han
defended thee in sikernes that may nat ben
overcomen. Knowest thou me nat? Why art
thou stille? Is it for shame or for astoninge?
It were me lever that it were for shame; but
it semeth me that astoninge hath oppres-
sed thee. And whan she say me nat only
stille, but withouten office of tunge & al dumb,
she leide hir hand softly upon my brest, and
seide: Here nis no peril, quod she; he is fallen
into a litargie, whiche that is a comune syke-
nes to hertes that ben deceived. He hath a litel
foryeten himself, but certes he shal lightly
remembren himself, yif so be that he hath
knowne me or now; & that he may so don, I
wil wyppen a litel his eyen, that ben derked by
the cloude of mortal thinges. Thise wordes
seide she, and with the lappe of hir garment,
yplyted in a frounce, she dryede myn eyen,
that weren fulle of the wawes of my wepinges.

Metre III.

Tunc me discussa liquerunt nocte tenebre.

THAS, whan that night was discussed
& chased away, derknesses forleften
me, and to myn eyen repeired ayein